

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EURE-00 CCO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 IO-12 CU-04 SAJ-01 ACDA-19

NIC-01 RSR-01 /116 W

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O 231541 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5774

USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL ZAGREB

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BELGRADE 1243

E. O. 11652

TAGS: OGEN, PFOR, YO

SUBJECT: CAMP COUNSELOR INTERVIEWS AND ATTACK ON VOA: EMBASSY
PRESS STATEMENT RE OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN STATEMENT AT
FSFA PRESS CONVERENCE MARCH 22

REF: BELGRADE 1227

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY TRANSMITS TEXT OF ITS PRESS STATEMENT RE
PRESS SPOKESMAN' S REPLY TO QUESTION RE CAMP COUNSELOR INTERVIEWS
AT FSFA PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY. GUIDANCE PROVIDED FOR MEDIA.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE FOLLOWING PRESS STATEMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED BY THE
EMBASSY IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRIES RE PRESS SPOKESMAN' S STATEMENT
YESTERDAY:

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

BEGIN QUOTE: THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IS DISAPPOINTED
BY MR. VUJOVIC' S RESPONSE, READ FROM A PREPARED STATEMENT,
TO A QUESTION ASKING HIM TO COMMENT ON THE INTERVIEWING
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OF LJUBLJANA STUDENTS BY UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVES. IN THE COURSE OF ITS REPRESENTATIONS TO OFFICIALS OF THE YUGOSLAV FEDERAL SECRETARIAT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE SECRETARIAT FOR INFORMATION OF THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, AS WELL AS TO THE YUGOSLAV EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, IT WAS AGREED THAT A MUTUAL DESIRE EXISTED THAT THIS ISSUE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO EXCLATE TO A DEGREE AT WHICH IT COULD DAMAGE THE GOOD RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BEWTEEN TWO COUNTRIES. MOREOVER, FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS, THE EMBASSY HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS MUTUALLY AGREED THAT MORE THAN SUFFICIENT PUBLICITY HAD ALREADY BEEN GIVEN TO THIS ISSUE AS WELL AS TO THE ATTACK ON VOA.

MOREOVER, WHILE WE NOTE WITH SATISFACTION THAT MR. VUJOVIC' S PREPARED STATEMENT DROPS THE DIRECT ATTACK ON THE VOICE OF AMERICA BY NAME, WE ARE DISTURBED AT THE UNFORTUNATE IMPLICATION IT GIVES THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND ITS OFFICERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CAMP COUNSELOR INTERVIEWS IN LJUBLJANA ARE IN SOME WAY LINKED WITH A " CAMPAIGN WHICH IS BEING PURSUED AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA" AND WHICH INCLUDES " USTASHI, CHETNIK AND OTHER EXTREMIST ELEMENTS."

THE EMBASSY HAS EXPRESSED REGRET AT THE MISUNDERSTANDING WHICH PERSISTS WITH REGARD TO THE ACTIVITY OF AMERICAN OFFICERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE LJUBLJANA CAMP COUNSELOR INTERVIEWS AND HAS GIVEN ASSURANCE THAT, IN ANY FUTURE INTERVIEWS OF POTENTIAL EXCHANGEES, CARE WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE CONTROVERSIAL AREAS. THE CHARE DIRECTED AGAINST THE VOICE OF AMERICA BY FRONT HAS BEEN REJECTED CATEGORICALLY. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE EMBASSY HAS TODAY SENT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF FRONT, REFUTING THE CHARGE AND REQUESTING THAT IT BE PUBLISHED IN THE INTEREST OF ACCURACY AND GOOD JOURNALISM.

IT IS THE EMBASSY' S HOPE THAT THE OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN' S STATEMENT WILL NOT RESULT IN A REVIVAL AND FURTHER PROLONGATION OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF THESE ISSUES, WHICH CAN ONLY RESULT IN THE SORT OF DAMAGE TO GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS WHICH IS IN THE MUTUAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF YUGOSLAVIA TO AVOID. END QUOTE.

END UNCLASSIFIED.
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3. SICNE NOT TO OUR ADVANTAGE TO ADD FUEL TO FIRE OF MEDIA
COVERAGE THESE SUBJECTS NOR TO ENGAGE IN RECRIMINATORY EXCHANGE
WITH YUGOSLAV MEDIA, EMBASSY BELIEVES VOA SHOULD CONFINE COVERAGE
TO ABOVE PRESS STATEMENT FOR TIME BEING, WHILE NOTING EXONERATION
ITS GOOD NAME.
TOON

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BELGRA01243
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BELGRADE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730336/aaaaieua.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 BELGRADE 1227
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <15-Oct-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971222
Subject: CAMP COUNSELOR INTERVIEWS AND ATTACK ON VOA: EMBASSY PRESS STATEMENT RE OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN STATEMENT AT FSFA PRESS CONVERENCE MARCH 22
TAGS: PFOR, YO
To: EUR
SECSTATE WASHDC
USIA
ZAGREB
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

